

Description

Method for transmission of digital information packets in a data network

The invention relates to a method for transmission of digital 5 information packets in a data network from an emitter to a receiver, as well as to a corresponding emitter and a corresponding receiver.

In digital data transmission the problem occurs of data being lost during transmission as a result of bad transmission 10 connections or low bandwidths. With packet-oriented data traffic in particular, incorrect or lost data leads to a loss of complete packets, in which case the content is no longer able to be reproduced correctly. Especially problematic is the loss of data with so-called multimedia applications, in which 15 the data is often to be displayed in real time without delay at the receiver.

What are referred to as broadcast and multicast transmissions are known from the prior art in which data is sent from a single emitter and can be received by a plurality of receivers.

20 What are known as Reed-Solomon codes can be used for error protection in these data transmissions. Redundancy is inserted into the data with the aid of the Reed-Solomon codes, so that if the data losses at the receiver are not too great the original data can be reconstructed. Known error protection 25 methods employing Reed-Solomon codes are suitable for example for the terrestrial data transmission in accordance with the DVB-T (DVB-T = Digital Video Broadcast - Terrestrial) standard and with the compatible DVB-H (Digital Video Broadcast - Handheld) standard. However problems arise when using other 30 data transmission mechanisms. The use of the future Multimedia Broadcast/Multicast Service (MBMS), in which a broadcast data

transmission over mobile radio channels is made possible, is especially problematic, since for a data transmission to a mobile receiver there is no guarantee of the data packets arriving at the receiver in the sequence in which they were sent by the emitter.

The object of the invention is therefore to create a method for transmission of digital Information packets from an emitter to a receiver which enables broadcast and multicast data transmission for a plurality of transmission networks.

This object is achieved by the independent claims. Developments of the invention are defined in the dependent claims.

In the inventive transmission method digital information packets are sent from an emitter to a receiver, with the information packets being transported by means of a transport layer. Transport layer in this case is to be understood as a transport layer in the sense of the OSI (OSI = Open Systems Interconnection) reference model. In the method the information packets to be transmitted are divided up in a first step in the emitter into one or more data packet groups. Redundant information in the form of redundancy packets is then inserted into the data packet groups. Subsequently the information packets and the redundancy packets are each supplemented by a signalisation field in data packet groups, in which information is stored with which the position of the relevant information packet or of the relevant redundancy packet within the data packet group can be determined. The data packet groups are then transmitted to the receiver and in the receiver the signalisation fields of the information packets and redundancy packets received are read out. Finally, with the aid of the information in the signalisation fields, the positions of information packets and redundancy packets in the relevant data packet groups are reconstructed. The idea of the invention is

based on supplementing the information packets or redundancy packets to be transmitted by a signalisation field with which the correct positioning of the individual packets in the data packet groups at the recipient is guaranteed. The method is
5 thus suitable also for transmission over data networks in which data packets do not arrive at the receiver in the order in which they were sent from the emitter.

In a preferred embodiment of the invention the information as to whether an information packet or a redundancy packet is
10 present is contained in the signalisation fields in each case. Furthermore the information about the data packet group to which the respective information packet or redundancy packet belongs is preferably contained in the signalisation fields. This information is especially important if large data packet
15 losses occur so that entire packet groups are lost. In a further preferred embodiment of the invention the signalisation fields further contain the information as to whether the relevant information packet or redundancy packet is the last information packet or redundancy packet in the data packet
20 group concerned. With the aid of this information, in combination with further information in the signalisation field the size of the data packet group can be derived, without parameters relating to this variable having to be transferred directly.
25 In an especially preferred embodiment of the invention the data packet groups concerned are a data matrix with a plurality of data fields in a plurality of rows and columns in each case. The data fields are preferably octets, i.e. 8-bit fields in this case.
30 If the data packet groups are arranged in the form of data matrixes the information packets and/or the redundancy packets in the signalisation field preferably contain the column and/or

line address of the relevant information packet or redundancy packet in the data matrix. The position of the first data field of the corresponding data packet in the data matrix is specified by this address. Preferably the redundancy packets 5 each occupy a row in the corresponding data matrix so that it is no longer necessary for the redundancy packets to transmit column addresses.

In a further embodiment of the invention the row length of the data matrix is reconstructed from the length of a correctly 10 received redundancy packet. Furthermore one or more signalisation fields can each contain two parameters selected from the set of parameters comprising the relevant redundancy packet number, the row address of the relevant redundancy packet and the number of rows in which information packets are 15 contained, and with the aid of the two parameters in the signalisation field the parameter of the parameter set can be determined which is not contained in the signalisation field. In addition the number of rows of the data matrix which are needed at the recipient for received redundancy packets can be 20 reconstructed with the aid of the correctly received redundancy packet with the highest redundancy packet number and its row address.

In a further preferred embodiment the previously known Reed-Solomon codes are used for generating the redundancy packets. 25 Furthermore the signalisation fields are preferably 24-bit fields.

In a further embodiment of the inventive method the receiver waits after receiving the last information packet and the last redundancy packet of a data packet group for a predetermined 30 interval for information packets or redundancy packets of the data packet group which are still missing. This achieves an effective reconstruction especially in cases in which the data

packets arrive partly delayed at the recipient.

The inventive method is especially suitable for use in a mobile radio network. In mobile radio networks the data is transmitted in the physical layer using various bearer services which leads

5 to different data delays so that the data packets are no longer absolutely necessarily received in the correct order. Through the use of a signalisation field in accordance with the invention a reconstruction of the data packet can be guaranteed even in such cases.

10 As well as the inventive transmission method, the invention further relates to an emitter for sending digital information packets which is able to be used in the inventive transmission method. The emitter is designed to enable it to execute the following method steps:

15 - The information packets to be transmitted are divided up into one or more data packet groups;

- Redundancy information in the form of redundancy packets is added to the data packet groups in each case;

- The information packets and the redundancy packets in the

20 data packet groups are each expanded by a signalisation field in which information is stored with which the position of the relevant information packet or of the relevant redundancy packet within the relevant data packet group can be determined;

25 - The data packet groups are sent to a recipient.

The invention also relates to a receiver for receiving digital information packets with the aid of the inventive transmission method, with the receiver being embodied such that it is able to execute the following method steps:

30 - The information packets and redundancy packets sent by an emitter are received;

- The signalisation fields of the received information

packets and redundancy packets are read out, and with the aid of the information in the signalisation fields, the positions of the information packets and redundancy packets in the relevant data packet groups are reconstructed.

5 Exemplary embodiments of the invention will now be described with reference to the enclosed drawings.

The figures show:

Figure 1 the schematic diagram of a data network in which the inventive method is used;

10 Figure 2 the data matrix used in an embodiment of the inventive method;

Figure 3 the schematic diagram of two types of data packet able to be used in the inventive method;

15 Figure 4 the layout of a signalisation field for an information packet used in the inventive method; and

Figure 5 the layout of a signalisation field for a redundancy packet used in inventive method.

Figure 1 shows a preferred scenario in which the method in accordance with invention can be used. This scenario involves
20 the transmission of multimedia data of a broadcast service which sends out data which can be received simultaneously by a number of receivers. The multimedia data is provided by a Broadcast Multicast Service Center BMSC and is transmitted over any given intermediate network Z to a mobile radio network RAN
25 (RAN = Radio Access Network). The mobile radio network RAN comprises a plurality of base stations B1 to B5, by means of which the multimedia data is sent to user equipment (UE) in the form of a mobile telephone over an air interface L.

The BMSC creates information packets which comprise a header and a payload, in which case the information packets are data packets which are transmitted with the aid of a transport layer in accordance with the OSI reference model. The scenario shown
5 in Figure 1 differs from the broadcast service DVBT in that on the one hand data transmission takes place over a mobile radio network and on the other hand the data transport is undertaken in packets via the transport layer. For the transmission over the air interface L the problem arises that for data transport
10 over a number of different mobile radio channels, the data no longer necessarily arrives in the same order as it was sent from the base station. Furthermore data packet losses occur on the various mobile radio channels. This makes a reconstruction of the information sent to the user equipment UE extremely
15 difficult.

To solve this problem it is proposed in accordance with the invention to add redundancy information to the information packets as well as to supplement the data packets with a signalisation field, in which case the signalisation field
20 makes it possible to reconstruct the received information packets in the correct order.

Figure 2 shows a data matrix in which the data packets in accordance with an embodiment of the invention are arranged at the emitter. The data to be transmitted is initially segmented
25 into information packets I_1, I_2, ... I_M, with this segmentation able to be undertaken by suitable protocols at different protocol layers such as RTP/UDP/IP for example (RTP = Real Time Protocol; UDP = User Datagram Protocol; IP = Internet Protocol). The individual information packets for I_1 to I_M in
30 this case each comprise header H_1, H_2, ..., H_M as well as payload P_1, P_2, ..., P_M.

The data packets I_1 to I_M are finally arranged in a media

data matrix I-M which contains K rows and J columns. The individual entries of the matrix are in this case data fields consisting of 8-bit symbols. Since the data packets contained in the matrix I-M cannot always be mapped exactly to the size 5 of the matrix, the matrix is filled after the last information packet I_M which still fits into matrix with what is known as padding P. Preferably the padding field is filled with zeros.

After the arrangement of the information packets in the matrix I-M the information packets are occupied by redundant data.

10 This is done column-by-column by inserting what is known as Reed-Solomon codes which are sufficiently known to the person skilled in the art. In the embodiment described here Reed-Solomon codes are used via Galois fields GF(2^8). In accordance with the embodiment of Figure 2 L rows of Reed-Solomon codes 15 are created in the form of redundancy packets RS_1, RS_2, ... RS_L which are arranged in the matrix RS-M. In this way an overall matrix GM is produced, featuring a total of N = K + L rows.

The Reed-Solomon codes used are what are known as (N,K) codes 20 with which the original can be reconstructed up to a loss of N-K symbols. Reed-Solomon codes are systematic codes, with which both symbol errors and also symbol losses can be detected, with the position of the loss having to be known in the latter case. If there are r symbol losses and s symbol errors in a data 25 matrix, all packets can be reconstructed for which the following applies:

$$2s + r \leq L.$$

In accordance with the inventive method the information packets and the redundancy packets of the data matrix GM are also 30 provided with a signalisation field. Figure 2 shows the locations at which such a signalisation field can be arranged

in an information packet. Two alternatives are shown in Figure 2, with the signalling packet AS being arranged in the upper alternative after the header H and the payload PL of the information packet. Alternatively, a variant is shown in the 5 lower information packet of Figure 2 in which the signalisation field AS is arranged between the header H and the payload PL. however other positions of the signalisation field are possible in the information packet. The signalisation field can be arranged in the redundancy packets in the same way since these 10 packets also feature a header and a payload.

The way in which the signalisation field AS can be structured for an Information packet in accordance with one embodiment of the invention is shown in Figure 4. The AS field is a 24-bit field, with the first five bits containing signalisation 15 information, labeled as "signaling" in Figure 4. The first bit of this 5-bit field is a data type flag which shows whether the corresponding packet is an Information packet or a redundancy packet. If it is an information packet, the flag is set to 0, if there is a redundancy packet present, the flag is set to 1. 20 The second bit of the 5-bit field is a flag which indicates whether the current data packet is the last packet in the data matrix. If it is, the flag is set to 1. The remaining three bits in the 5-bit field contain a modulo-8 matrix counter. This counter is incremented if the data packets of a new matrix are 25 transmitted. The counter thus shows the data matrix from which the corresponding information packet originates. The counter is helpful if large data packet losses occur over a number of data matrices, since in this case the data matrix to which the received information packet belongs can still be established. 30 An 11-bit field with which the column address of the relevant information packet is transferred follows the 5-bit field. This field is labeled "column address" in Figure 4. The column address in this case specifies the column position of the first

symbol of the corresponding packet in the matrix I-M. The field "column address" is followed by the field "row address" which is an 8-bit field and specifies the row position of the first symbol of the relevant information packet in the matrix GM.

5 Figure 5 shows the layout of the signalisation field for a redundancy packet. This field is again a 24-bit field, with, in a similar way to the signalisation field in the information packets, a field "signaling" being used which contains the data type flag, a flag for displaying the last redundancy packet in
10 the matrix RS-M as well as a modulo-8 matrix counter. The function of this field thus corresponds to the function of the field in Figure 4. This field is followed by the field "res." which represents a reservation field and is not needed for signaling. The field "RS packet no." follows between bit 8 and
15 15, which contains the sequence number of the redundancy packet within the matrix RS-M. This field is helpful where packet losses occur between the matrix I-M and the matrix RS-M, i.e. if the first and where necessary further redundancy packets of the matrix RS-M are lost. In this case the sequence can be used
20 to determine the row in which the matrix RS-M begins. The field "row address" follows the field "RS packet no." which is an 8-bit field and indicates the position of the first symbol of the corresponding redundancy packet in the matrix GM. By contrast with the AS field for the information packets, the information
25 as to the column address at which the packet is located does not have to be transferred in the AS field for the redundancy packets, since each redundancy packet in the embodiment described here always occupies a whole row.

After the creation of the data matrix in accordance with Figure
30 2 at the emitter the information packets and the redundancy packets are transmitted to the receiver. In the event of packet losses, the information packets can be reconstructed there with

the aid of the redundancy packets as follows:

For reconstruction the row length J as well as the number of columns K of the matrix I-M must be known. Since the redundancy data packets always occupy a whole row, the parameter J can be

5 derived from the packet length of the individual redundancy packets. The parameter K can in its turn be derived from the row address and the packet number of one of the correctly received redundancy packets.

The parameter L, which specifies the number of rows of the matrix RS-M, also does not have to be transmitted to the receiver. It can either be derived from the row address of the last redundancy packet or it is replaced by a smaller value L' which corresponds to the row of the last redundancy packet received.

15 In the receiver the correctly received information packets and redundancy packets are analyzed, with the information packets being positioned with the aid of the row and column address as well as the matrix counter in the AS field to the correct position in the data matrix. Subsequently the signalisation fields are cut out of the information packets and the packet length parameters in the headers of the information packets are issued. In addition the checksum field of the header is recalculated. The process is similar for the redundancy packet method, with the header of this packet being removed

20 completely. If packets are lost during transmission, the corresponding entries are marked in the data matrix GM as losses. A data matrix can in this case be completely restored again if the number of symbol losses per column is not greater than L.

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30 A further problem for the reconstruction of the data matrix at the receiver thus results from the fact that the receiver does

not initially know whether a missing data packet has been lost or whether it is delayed in time because of different transmission procedures via different bearer services in the mobile radio network. To counter this problem, in accordance
5 with the embodiment of the inventive method described here, after the receipt of the last information packet and the receipt of the last redundancy packet, there is a predetermined wait time before processing of the data matrix is continued. Thus data packets arriving after a delay at the receiver are
10 also taken into account in the data matrix. Should the last information packet in the data matrix should have been lost however, the receiver has no opportunity of finding out how large the padding P in the matrix I-M is since the size of the last data packet is not known. In this case all symbols after
15 the last correctly received information data packet must be marked up to the end of column K as data packet losses, although padding can also be contained in this area.